

ACC NEWS

President's Page: Integrating the Internet Into Your Practice

Arthur Garson, Jr., MD, MPH, FACC

President, American College of Cardiology



Just as the Internet has affected almost every aspect of the public's lives, so are the online services efforts of the American College of Cardiology (ACC) being integrated into every corner of the College. The ACC is harnessing the Internet's power to help its members make the most of their time. We have even developed a mission statement for our online services: "The ACC will be the leading electronic source of guidelines and standards, education, advocacy, and value-added services for cardiology-related health care providers and their patients. The ACC will achieve this status by cost-effectively producing and distributing the most accurate, highest-quality information products through multiple, highly credible information channels."

This mission statement will have important implications for you, including many opportunities to streamline some of your activities and to make accessing some types of information much less involved and cumbersome. We are working to make the ACC Web site, <http://www.acc.org>, one that you'll visit often for a wide range of reasons.

GUIDELINE DISSEMINATION

At the most basic level, our new commitment to online services is aimed at providing you with the most up-to-date and informative resources possible. The ACC/American Heart Association practice guidelines on managing acute myocardial infarction are a good example. To expedite dissemination of crucial new information about treatment, an updated version of this practice guideline was published in its entirety on the College's Web site before the changes were published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology (JACC)*. Furthermore, its publication on the Internet helps physicians find changes in the guideline quickly because old text is marked by strikeout and new text is shaded in red. This new guideline-dissemination technique is just one example of the College's forays into using the Internet to make vital clinical information available as rapidly as possible.

ACC UPDATES

The ACC site can also be used to learn more about the College and its chapters or to locate a database of ACC educational publications, programs, and products. The site provides instant access to clinical information such as

consensus documents, policy statements, and clinical alerts. For updates on the College's advocacy efforts, the Web site's "Issues Center" features news about the variety of issues the ACC is tackling. Other news on the site is in the form of abstracts of journal articles and postings on cardiology news.

PARTNERING TO PROVIDE NEW SERVICES

To supplement these resources, the College also works with outside vendors to bring members the information they need. In March, for instance, we launched an exclusive news and information service on Medcast Networks. Although this service is available only by subscription, it runs on Internet-like technology to provide continually updated news and information about cardiovascular research and educational opportunities. The College's channel on this network features at least one daily news story; these stories are often based on educational programs offered in the ACC Learning Center, extramural programs, and Annual Scientific Session presentations. Through the ACC's channel on Medcast Networks, the College has extended the outreach of its educational programs and kept its members who cannot attend programs updated on advances in cardiovascular care. Also on the College's channel are stories based on the scientific developments reported in *JACC*; updates on important events happening at the College; and synopses of the College's efforts in advocacy, provision of clinical information, and education.

In addition to Medcast offerings, other opportunities are under development. In January, a collaboration with Elsevier Science Inc. will give ACC members access to a service called *CardioSource*. *CardioSource* will feature the full text of *JACC*, *The Lancet*, and nine other top journals, plus access to a news service, the MEDLINE database, a clinical trials database, and a job-hunting database.

PATIENT EDUCATION

Our patients are also turning to the Internet for information. Unfortunately, much of the information our patients are accessing on the Internet is of dubious quality. In a recent study at the University of Michigan, for instance, researchers analyzed Web sites offering information about a type of bone cancer and found that a great deal of the information was outdated, misleading, or just plain wrong.

The College is working to find solutions to the problem of misinformation. Eventually, we may be able to give an ACC "stamp of approval" to Web sites to help you and your patients in navigating the enormous amount of health information available online.

INTERACTIVE SERVICES

Information isn't the only thing the ACC's online services have to offer, however. Instead of simply being a one-way transfer of information, the Web site also features many interactive services. For example, the ACC Web site can be used to register for the Annual Scientific Session and even create a unique itinerary customized to your interests and expertise. You can find a new partner or a new job via the ACC Practice Opportunity Line, and soon the College will implement creative e-commerce capabilities. Eventually you'll be able to use the Web site to register for all of the ACC's programs, purchase books and other products from the College and external vendors, and even gain access to continuing medical education opportunities from a range of sources—all without having to pick up the phone.

DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL WEB SITES

Many of you are probably already experienced Internet users. The College can help you take your interest to the next level. Perhaps you have been thinking about creating a Web site to market your practice and help you educate your

patients. Through a partnership with a company called Salu.net, the ACC offers a free service that makes it possible for you to create your own site in only minutes. All you have to do is choose one of Salu.net's five templates and then follow the program's prompts as it builds your site automatically. You can update your site as often as you wish.

INTERNET ACCESS

If you don't yet have Internet access, don't worry. The ACC can help you there, too. The College co-sponsors a free online service designed especially for physicians. Doctors' Net Access (DNA) for Cardiologists offers ACC members unlimited Internet access and other services.

Clearly, the College can help you integrate this invaluable resource into your practice. More than 25 million Americans turned to the Internet for answers to health questions this year. The ACC and its members will be there as well.

I welcome your thoughts about how the ACC's online programs can serve you best. Please feel free to write to me at Heart House, 9111 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda, MD 20814-1699; fax me at 301-897-9745; or e-mail me at *pres@acc.org*.

Reprint requests and correspondence: Dr. Arthur Garson, Jr., Baylor College of Medicine, MC-14460, 6621 Fannin Street, Houston, Texas 77030.
